

United States District Court, Northern District of Illinois

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Name of Assigned Judge or Magistrate Judge	CHARLES R. NORGLE	Sitting Judge if Other than Assigned Judge	
CASE NUMBER	08 C 4684	DATE	8-28-08
CASE TITLE	LC Johnson (#N-92369) vs. Terry McCann, et al.		

DOCKET ENTRY TEXT:

The plaintiff's motion for leave to proceed *in forma pauperis* [#3] is granted. The court orders the trust fund officer at the plaintiff's place of incarceration to deduct \$11.43 from the plaintiff's account for payment to the clerk of court as an initial partial filing fee, and to continue making monthly deductions in accordance with this order. The clerk shall send a copy of this order to the trust fund officer at the Hill Correctional Center. The clerk is directed to issue summonses for service on the defendants by the U.S. Marshal. The clerk is further directed to send the plaintiff a Magistrate Judge Consent Form and Instructions for Submitting Documents along with a copy of this order. The plaintiff's motion for appointment of counsel [#4] is denied.

■ [For further details see text below.]



Docketing to mail notices.

STATEMENT

The plaintiff, a state prisoner, has brought this *pro se* civil rights action pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983. The plaintiff claims that the defendants, officials at the Stateville Correctional Center, violated the plaintiff's constitutional rights by failing to accommodate his religious beliefs and by denying him equal protection. More specifically, the plaintiff alleges that the defendants compelled him to cut off his dreadlocks, under threat of force and in violation of his Rastafarian faith, while permitting other inmates to grow their hair long.

The plaintiff's motion for leave to proceed *in forma pauperis* is granted. Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(1), the plaintiff is assessed an initial partial filing fee of \$11.43. The trust fund officer at the plaintiff's place of incarceration is authorized and ordered to collect the partial filing fee from the plaintiff's trust fund account and pay it directly to the clerk of court. After payment of the initial partial filing fee, the plaintiff's trust fund officer is directed to collect monthly payments from the plaintiff's trust fund account in an amount equal to 20% of the preceding month's income credited to the account. Monthly payments shall be forwarded to the clerk of court each time the amount in the account exceeds \$10 until the full \$350 filing fee is paid. All payments shall be sent to the Clerk, United States District Court, 219 S. Dearborn St., Chicago, Illinois 60604, attn: Cashier's Desk, 20th Floor, and shall clearly identify the plaintiff's name and this case number. This payment obligation will follow the plaintiff wherever he may be transferred.

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Under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A, the court is required to conduct a prompt threshold review of the complaint. Here, accepting the plaintiff's allegations as true, the court finds that the plaintiff has articulated a colorable federal cause of action against the Stateville officials who required him to cut his hair. Under the First Amendment, prisoners "retain the right to practice their religion to the extent that such practice is compatible with the legitimate penological demands of the state." *Al-Alamin v. Gramley*, 926 F.2d 680, 686 (7th Cir. 1991). "[W]hen a prison regulation impinges on inmates' constitutional rights, the regulation is valid [only] if it is reasonably related to legitimate penological interests." *Turner v. Safley*, 482 U.S. 78, 89 (1987). "This is not a demanding standard." *Reed v. Faulkner*, 842 F.2d 960, 962 (7th Cir. 1988) (which summarizes the principal doctrines of Rastafarianism). As explained in *Reed*, if "the regulation limiting the length of male inmates' hair strikes a reasonable balance between the interest in religious liberty and the needs of prison safety and security, he must lose on his free exercise claim." *Reed* at 962. Thus, while a more fully developed record may establish that the plaintiff suffered no constitutional violation, the defendants must respond to the complaint.

The clerk shall issue summonses forthwith and send the plaintiff a Magistrate Judge Consent Form and Instructions for Submitting Documents along with a copy of this order.

The United States Marshals Service is appointed to serve the defendants. Any service forms necessary for the plaintiff to complete will be sent by the Marshal as appropriate to serve the defendants with process. The U.S. Marshal is directed to make all reasonable efforts to serve the defendants. With respect to former correctional employees who no longer can be found at the work address provided by the plaintiff, the Illinois Department of Corrections shall furnish the Marshal with the defendant's last-known address. The information shall be used only for purposes of effectuating service [or for proof of service, should a dispute arise] and any documentation of the address shall be retained only by the Marshal. Address information shall not be maintained in the court file, nor disclosed by the Marshal. The Marshal is authorized to mail a request for waiver of service to the defendants in the manner prescribed by Fed. R. Civ. P. 4(d)(2) before attempting personal service.

The plaintiff is instructed to file all future papers concerning this action with the clerk of court in care of the Prisoner Correspondent. The plaintiff must provide the original plus a judge's copy of every document filed. In addition, the plaintiff must send an exact copy of any court filing to the defendants [or to defense counsel, once an attorney has entered an appearance on their behalf]. Every document filed must include a certificate of service stating to whom exact copies were mailed and the date of mailing. Any paper that is sent directly to the judge or that otherwise fails to comply with these instructions may be disregarded by the court or returned to the plaintiff.

The plaintiff's motion for appointment of counsel is denied. Civil litigants do not have a constitutional or statutory right to counsel. *See Johnson v. Doughty*, 433 F.3d 1001, 1006 (7th Cir. 2006). Nevertheless, a district court may, in its discretion, "request an attorney to represent any person unable to afford counsel." *Gil v. Reed*, 381 F.3d 649, 656 (7th Cir. 2004), *citing* 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(1); *Luttrell v. Nickel*, 129 F.3d 933, 936 (7th Cir. 1997). In deciding whether to appoint counsel, the court must "first determine if the indigent has made reasonable
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STATEMENT (continued)

efforts to retain counsel and was unsuccessful or that the indigent was effectively precluded from making such efforts.” *Gil*, 381 F.3d at 656, *quoting Jackson v. County of McLean*, 953 F.2d 1070, 1072 (7th Cir. 1992). If so, the court must consider: (1) whether, given the degree of difficulty of the case, the plaintiff appears competent to try it himself; and (2) whether the assistance of counsel would provide a substantial benefit to the court or the parties, potentially affecting the outcome of the case. *Pruitt v. Mote*, 503 F.3d 647, 654 (7th Cir. 2007); *Gil*, 381 F.3d at 656; *see also* Local Rule 83.36(c) (N.D. Ill.) (listing the factors to be considered in determining whether to appoint counsel).

After considering the above factors, the court concludes that appointment of counsel is not warranted in this case. Although the plaintiff has articulated colorable claims, he has alleged no physical or mental disability that might preclude him from adequately investigating the facts giving rise to his complaint. Neither the legal issues raised in the complaint nor the evidence that might support the plaintiff’s claims are so complex or intricate that a trained attorney is necessary. The plaintiff appears more than capable of presenting his case. It should additionally be noted that the court grants *pro se* litigants wide latitude in the handling of their lawsuits. Therefore, the plaintiff’s motion for appointment of counsel is denied at this time. Should the case proceed to a point that assistance of counsel is appropriate, the court may revisit this request.